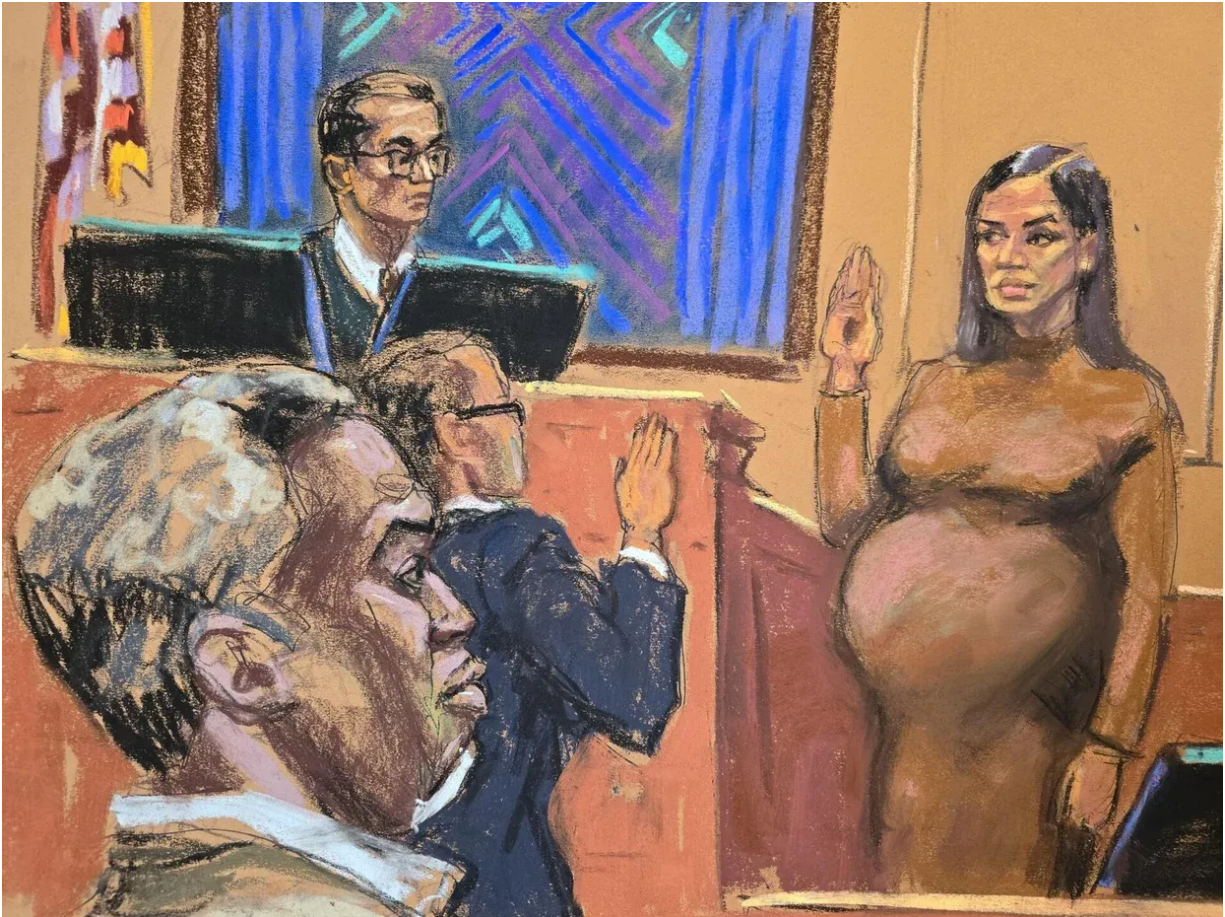


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Dear *Permission to be Powerful* Reader,

Cassie Takes the Stand in a Tense Courtroom

R&B singer Casandra “Cassie” Ventura took the witness stand Tuesday as the prosecution’s star witness, marking a dramatic showdown in Sean “Diddy” Combs’s federal sex trafficking and racketeering trial^{[1](#)}.

Visibly pregnant with her third child, Ventura appeared composed yet anxious – occasionally dabbing her eyes with a tissue – as she was sworn in before U.S. District Judge Arun Subramanian².

Combs, seated at the defense table in a dark suit, watched his former girlfriend intently as she faced the jury for the first time, though Ventura pointedly avoided meeting his gaze³.

In the gallery, Ventura’s husband Alex Fine quietly observed while Combs’s mother, Janice Combs, sat behind her son – a silent tableau of two families drawn into the courtroom drama⁴.

The tension was palpable as Assistant U.S. Attorney Emily Johnson began direct examination.

She started with basic biographical questions to put Ventura at ease: the 38-year-old witness identified herself as “a musician, an entertainer” and acknowledged a decade-long relationship with Combs⁵.

But within minutes, Johnson’s questioning turned pointed.

“Whose decision was it?”

The prosecutor asked again and again regarding each disturbing encounter Ventura would soon describe.

“Sean,”

Ventura replied each time, firmly pinning the initiative on Combs⁶.

Jurors leaned in as Johnson methodically established that Ventura had not volunteered for the depraved acts at issue – she was following Combs’s orders.

Courtroom sketch of Cassie Ventura (foreground) testifying while a stoic Sean “Diddy” Combs (background, left) looks on.

Cassie, visibly pregnant, avoided eye contact with Combs as she recounted the darkest moments of their 10-year relationship.[7](#)

Under Johnson’s questioning, Ventura delivered shocking, graphic testimony about what Combs chillingly labeled “freak-offs” – drug-fueled, marathon sex parties with male escorts that he orchestrated for his own gratification[8](#).

She testified that Combs “choreographed” everything at these events, dictating what everyone wore, who participated in each sex act, and even minute details like lubricants, candles, linens and the room’s temperature.[9](#)

“It was his fantasy... He was controlling the whole situation. He was directing it,”

Ventura said, describing how Combs would script every encounter to satisfy himself[10](#).

Ventura explained that at these so-called freak-offs, she was...

“instructed to have sex with male escorts while Combs watched”

Sometimes for two or even three days straight[11](#).

Her **first** freak-off occurred when she was just 22 years old, at a Los Angeles house Combs had rented.

“I was confused and nervous,”

she recounted of that initial ordeal, saying she felt she had no choice but to participate.[12](#)

The male escort’s photo was shown to the jury as Ventura spoke.

“I understood him to be a dancer,” she testified.

“He was paid to entertain, to dance and to have intercourse with me.”[13](#)

The matter-of-fact bluntness of her words caused a few jurors’ eyes to widen.

After that first incident, Ventura said, freak-off sessions became almost weekly events for years – occurring in cities across the globe, from New York and Los Angeles to Miami, Atlanta, Las Vegas, and even remote locales like Turks and Caicos and Ibiza[14](#).

It was a relentless routine “*until about 2017 or 2018,*” she estimated, so frequent that she lost count[15](#).

“It would be impossible to remember every freak-off,” Ventura admitted.

Citing not just their sheer number but also the haze of drugs she took each time to endure them[16](#).

She testified that Combs plied her with narcotics – including ecstasy, GHB, ketamine, mushrooms, and even cocaine – to facilitate these marathons. The

stimulants kept her awake because...

“Combs wouldn’t allow her to sleep” during multi-day sessions.

Meanwhile, sedatives and psychedelics helped her detach from the trauma.

“For me it was dissociative and numbing,”

Ventura said of using drugs before every freak-off.

“I couldn’t imagine myself doing any of that without having some sort of buffer or way to not feel it for what it really was – which was emotionless sex with a stranger that I didn’t really want to have sex with.”[17](#)

Ventura’s voice quavered as she conveyed the toll these ordeals took on her psyche.

She described feeling reduced to a prop in Combs’s deviant theater.

“I was an object being heavily objectified by men in that scenario,” she said, tearing up[18](#).

Often, Combs would push the perversity further – demanding **multiple male escorts at once** or forcing her to repeat degrading sex acts if he felt the session was ending “too soon” for his liking.[19](#)

On some occasions Combs remained in the room watching intently; other times he would slip into an adjacent room and voyeuristically observe via FaceTime video feed[20](#).

Ventura testified she even tried to “speed up” the paid sexual encounters just to reach the one moment she perversely *looked forward to*:

“the part I liked – the one-on-one time with Sean after,” once the escorts were gone^{[21](#)}.

She said that pathetic reward – a few intimate moments alone with Combs, the man she loved, after enduring his fantasy – was

“the only time I could get with him” during those years^{[22](#)}.

That admission brought Ventura to quiet tears on the stand^{[23](#)}.

Throughout this graphic testimony, the courtroom was riveted. Some jurors shifted uneasily in their seats.

Others fixated on Ventura’s every word, perhaps in disbelief at the lurid world being described.

Combs sat impassively at the defense table, hands clasped in front of his face.

Only the tightening of his jaw and an occasional whisper to his attorneys betrayed any emotion as his former girlfriend laid bare the darkest secrets of their decade together.

“All I Was Good For”: Life Under Combs’s Control

Ventura’s testimony also painted a broader picture of a young woman under the **total control** of a powerful music mogul.

She recounted how she first met Combs in 2006, when the then-19-year-old signed a 10-album record deal with his Bad Boy label^{[24](#)}.

Initially, Combs was charismatic and fatherly toward his new protégé.

Around her 21st birthday, however, he crossed a line – kissing her without warning in the bathroom of his Las Vegas hotel suite²⁵.

“I was just really confused at the time... and young,”

Ventura said of that first illicit kiss²⁶. She remembered crying and running out of the suite, utterly shocked.

“I didn’t know the lay of the land,” she explained.

She wasn’t used to a powerful executive acting in “a sexual and romantic way” toward her, and she felt overwhelmed²⁷.

A few months later, Combs invited Ventura on a trip to Miami. It was there, on a yacht off the Florida coast, that their relationship turned sexual.

Ventura testified that she had a glass of wine one afternoon and then, at Combs’s urging, took ecstasy for the first time before they slept together²⁸.

“After that, we were just together,” she said simply, describing how she fell under Combs’s spell.

In those early days she was “*enamored*” with him – “*I really fell in love with him,*”

Ventura admitted – and became like his “*little shadow,*” eager to please the man who held her heart and her career in his hands²⁹.

But that love quickly curdled into isolation and fear.

Ventura described how Combs steadily dominated every aspect of her life.

He dictated how she should dress and style her hair, decided whom she was “allowed” to speak with, and even micromanaged her daily schedules and musical projects[30](#).

Combs would bombard her with phone calls whenever they were apart – she called him an “incessant caller” – and if she didn’t answer, he had staff and security hunt her down.

“He would have staff, assistants and security continuously pester me until he found me,” Ventura testified, illustrating the lengths Combs went to monitor her whereabouts[31](#).

It even became part of his security team’s job to keep an eye on her at all times[32](#).

Meanwhile, the rising star’s music career mysteriously stalled. Ventura told jurors she recorded “hundreds” of songs over the years – enough material for nine albums – yet not a single album was ever released[33](#).

Combs, the head of her label, kept delaying or shelving her projects. She received no compensation for all that work, and her once-promising career languished[34](#).

Ventura came to believe this was by design: keeping her musically sidelined was another way for Combs to control her and ensure she was dependent on him.

Ventura then recounted how Combs’s treatment of her grew physically abusive within the first year of dating. If she angered or “ignored” him, violence was often the result.[35](#)

“He would... knock me over, drag me, kick me, stomp me in the head if I was down,”

Ventura said, her voice catching as jurors visibly flinched at the brutality of that description³⁶. She testified that Combs's violent outbursts happened "too frequently" to count³⁷.

When arguments erupted, she learned to brace herself for blows.

Combs would sometimes "*mash my head*" during these attacks and would not relent even after she fell to the floor³⁸.

In one chilling detail, Ventura said that if she ever tried to fight back or flee, Combs's bodyguards were under orders to intervene –

not to protect her, but to restrain her until Combs was finished with his rage³⁹.

The implication was clear: even Combs's employees were enlisted to enforce his control through intimidation.

Despite describing these beatings in a soft, matter-of-fact tone, Ventura's hands trembled as she demonstrated how Combs would yank her by the hair or kick her in the ribs.

At one point she closed her eyes and took a deep breath, seemingly collecting herself. In the jury box, one woman pressed a hand to her mouth; another juror looked down at his notepad, furiously scribbling notes.

The courtroom fell silent except for Ventura's halting voice and the occasional clack of the stenographer's machine, as everyone absorbed the harrowing portrait of life with Diddy.

To cap Ventura's first day of testimony, prosecutors presented a key piece of evidence that left the courtroom in stunned silence:

A security video from 2016 showing Combs viciously assaulting Cassie.

The grainy footage, captured in the hallway of the InterContinental Hotel in Los Angeles, was replayed for the jury as Ventura looked on[40](#).

In it, Combs can be seen yanking Ventura by the hair, dragging her down a corridor, and repeatedly kicking her while she's on the ground[41](#).

Some jurors audibly gasped; others went pale.

Several jurors, after an initial shocked glance at the video monitors, turned their eyes toward Ventura instead – watching her face as she relived the horror on-screen[42](#).

On the stand, Ventura kept her eyes downcast, though she agreed to narrate the scene for the jury.

She explained that this beating occurred during one of the “freak-off” nights in 2016, after Combs flew into a jealous rage at the hotel.[43](#)

“The next thing I knew, I was just thrown to the ground. It was really fast,”

Ventura testified, describing how Combs snapped and attacked her with stunning speed[44](#).

In the video, Ventura is seen curled on the floor trying to shield herself as Combs looms over her.

When the prosecutor gently asked why she didn't try to get up, Cassie's answer was bleak:

“Because it felt like the safest place to be.”[45](#)

In that moment, the full weight of her words – *the safest place was on the floor being kicked* – hung over the courtroom.

Even Combs’s stoic façade cracked slightly as the video played. He shifted in his seat, jaw clenched, and avoided looking at the screen where his own violence was on display.

As soon as the court adjourned for a brief recess afterward, Combs blotted his brow with a handkerchief.

In a telling contrast, he then turned and formed a heart shape with his hands toward one of his young twin daughters seated behind him, mouthing “thank you,” and blew a gentle kiss to his elderly mother in the gallery[46](#).

The tender gesture from a man accused of such brutality was not lost on observers – one reporter in the gallery noted a juror raising an eyebrow at the display.

Ventura, for her part, appeared emotionally drained after the video.

She wiped away tears as she stepped down from the witness stand for the day, refusing to even glance in Combs’s direction.

In a poignant scene, the courtroom sketch artist captured Ventura walking out past Combs – her face resolute, eyes forward, as Combs stared blankly ahead, scarcely acknowledging her departure[47](#).

Day 2 of the trial ended with that charged image of the former lovers in silent transit, passing within inches of one another yet a world apart.

After Ventura's explosive direct testimony, Combs's defense team prepared to hit back hard.

Though full cross-examination was set to begin on Wednesday morning, defense attorneys wasted no time signaling their strategy.

As soon as jurors were out of the room, lead defense lawyer Marc Agnifilo could be seen gesticulating animatedly at the counsel table, outlining points he planned to raise with Ventura under cross.

The core of the defense narrative is that Ventura's relationship with Combs – however dysfunctional – was consensual, and that she is now exaggerating or reframing it as trafficking for financial gain or revenge.

“Sean Combs is a complicated man, but this is not a complicated case,”

defense attorney Teny Geragos had told the jury in her opening statement the day before^{[48](#)}.

She conceded that Combs could be “extremely jealous” and that “*violence did take place*,” even calling the caught-on-camera 2016 assault “indefensible.”

But Geragos argued vehemently that those incidents were domestic disputes unrelated to the federal charges.

“It is not evidence of sex trafficking. It is evidence of domestic violence,” Geragos declared of the hotel beating.^{[49](#)}

Suggesting that while Combs may be guilty of personal wrongdoing, he is not guilty of the specific crimes in this trial.

On cross-examination, Agnifilo zeroed in on this theme of a “mutually toxic” romance.

With an aggressive, confrontational tone, he pressed Ventura about her continued involvement with Combs despite the alleged abuse.

At one point he posited that Ventura was not just a victim but an active participant in the turmoil.

“There was hitting on both sides, wasn’t there?”

Agnifilo suggested, echoing the defense’s claim that Ventura sometimes fought back physically⁵⁰.

Ventura firmly denied ever harming Combs in return, insisting any violence in their relationship flowed in one direction.

Agnifilo also challenged Ventura’s portrayal of the freak-offs as coercive.

He highlighted that Ventura herself often contacted and paid the male escorts.

“You were the one arranging these encounters, correct?” he asked, attempting to cast her as a willing orchestrator.

Ventura explained that while she made logistical arrangements at Combs’s behest,

“I never wanted to do it. I did it because Sean told me to”⁵¹.

Time and again, she reminded the courtroom, Combs held the power in their relationship:

“Only one of us had control, and it was him,” she said, paraphrasing the prosecution’s core argument⁵².

The sparring grew especially heated when the 2016 assault video came up. Agnifilo suggested that the footage, while ugly, proved Ventura’s point about Combs’s jealousy rather than any sex-trafficking motive.

He posited that the fight erupted from personal jealousy – hinting that Ventura might have provoked Combs’s anger by flirting with the male escort that night.

“Isn’t it true you screamed ‘I’m sorry, I’m sorry!’ because you felt guilty for making him jealous?”

The defense attorney challenged, referencing testimony from a male escort who witnessed Ventura apologize to Combs during that incident⁵³.

Cassie shot back that the only thing she regretted was not escaping the relationship sooner.

“I was apologizing because I was terrified,” she responded, her voice cutting through the hush in the courtroom.

Throughout this contentious exchange, jurors watched the dynamics closely – Ventura steadily maintaining her composure, Agnifilo prowling before the jury box, and Combs leaning forward at the defense table with an intent frown.

Judge Subramanian occasionally interrupted to sustain objections when questions became argumentative, a reminder to the defense to keep the cross focused on facts.

By late afternoon, as the cross-examination continued to chip away at Ventura's credibility, both witness and attorney appeared exhausted.

Yet Ventura did not waver from her central claims.

She acknowledged under cross that she had settled a civil lawsuit against Combs for an undisclosed sum in late 2023 – a fact the defense repeatedly emphasized – but she rejected any insinuation that she fabricated her allegations for money [5455](#).

“I came here to tell the truth,” Ventura insisted, looking directly at the jury. “No one deserves what he did to me.”

Her steadfast demeanor under the barrage of defense questions appeared to make an impression; one juror notably nodded in sympathy as Ventura reaffirmed her testimony.

“I was fully dressed. He told me to get into the bathtub. The tub was filled with hot baby oil.”

Cassie recounted how Combs forced her into a bathtub filled with heated Johnson & Johnson baby oil during one of the “freak-offs.”

The detail alone left jurors looking visibly disturbed — but what followed was worse:

“Then he and the escort urinated on me. I couldn't breathe. I started choking.”

She said the act left her physically ill and emotionally shattered. The combination of hot oil, humiliation, and urine caused her to panic and gasp for air as Combs and the escort stood over her.

According to Cassie:

“I felt like it was all I was good for. It was disgusting. I felt humiliated.”

—ABC News, May 13, 2025

This moment — arguably the most humiliating described in open court — drew gasps from the gallery and forced Combs’s own twin daughters to exit the courtroom for the second time that day, unable to sit through the graphic testimony.

As Day 2 concluded, the courtroom atmosphere was electric from the day’s emotional highs and lows.

The jury had witnessed Cassie Ventura’s harrowing journey – from a naïve 19-year-old singer plucked from obscurity into a glittering world, to a broken young woman trapped in a cycle of sexual exploitation, violence, and fear.

They heard, in Ventura's own trembling words, how Combs allegedly turned his fame and wealth into tools of manipulation: forcing her into degrading "freak-off" orgies, beating her "too frequently" to recall, and exerting near-total control over her life⁵⁶.

They also saw Combs's attorneys begin to mount a forceful counter-narrative – that Ventura stayed in the relationship by choice, that the couple's issues were those of a turbulent romance rather than a criminal enterprise.

The truth of these claims will ultimately be for the jury to decide, but there was no denying the impact of Ventura's testimony.

It was, as one veteran court reporter whispered, "the most gripping testimony I've ever heard in a federal trial."

Even after the judge gaveled the session to a close, the drama lingered. Combs stood and buttoned his suit jacket, momentarily locking eyes with a supporter in the gallery, while across the aisle Ventura was enveloped in a protective embrace by her husband.

Neither Combs nor Ventura so much as glanced at each other as they exited on opposite sides of the courtroom⁵⁷.

But the weight of what had transpired between them – in private for years, and now in public on the record – hung heavy in the air.

Outside the courthouse, as dusk fell over Manhattan, Combs's mother hurried her son into a black SUV amid a crush of cameras.

A few minutes later, Cassie Ventura emerged flanked by federal marshals and her attorneys. She paused on the courthouse steps, eyes blinking against the flashbulbs, and then walked into the night without a word.

Day 2 of Sean “Diddy” Combs’s trial had ended, but its sensational revelations and courtroom theatrics will undoubtedly reverberate as the trial moves forward.

The jurors – eight men and four women from diverse walks of life[58](#) – now carry with them Ventura’s raw account of “freak-offs,” violence, and survival.

And as they return tomorrow for Day 3, they will do so with the indelible image of Cassie Ventura on the stand – standing up, at long last, to the man she says “humiliated” and “hurt” her in ways few can imagine[59](#).

Until next time,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink. The signature appears to read "Anton Vanev". The first name "Anton" is written in a cursive script, and the last name "Vanev" is written in a more bold, stylized cursive. There are long, sweeping horizontal strokes above and below the names, and a diagonal line crossing through the middle of the signature.

Dancer, Writer, Buddhist.



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